

"Transcend the Ordinary"

Elul 5781 - Kislev 5782

September 2021 - November 2021



Bring Anti-Bias Education to Beit Sefer

By SUE BOJDAK, Director of Education

Do you remember seeing images of that sign during the Muslim Ban airport protests in 2017 that said, "This is why I went to Hebrew School"?

My colleagues and I shouted, "Yes! Yes! Yes!" as that image made its way around the Facebook universe. We like to imagine that at the heart of the Hebrew school experience are our Jewish values and that our kids will just absorb them and bring them into their lives as Jews in the world.

One thing that many of us have learned during this period of renewed racial reckoning since the murder of George Floyd is that unexamined good intentions about being righteous people in the world are not enough. It is not enough to change systemic racism. It is not enough to

uproot our own unconscious biases. To be anti-racist, to be living our Jewish values in the world, is active work, intentional work.

Anti-bias education, as first articulated by educator Louise Derman-Sparks and her colleagues in the late 1980s, takes a proactive position on creating the values-driven, difference-conscious, equity-seeking, activist-oriented world we want to live in.

It's a model of education that asks educators to examine their own biases and to raise the next generation to be people who know themselves, see and celebrate differences, recognize inequity and seek justice, and live in the world as activists and allies.

This year at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer we will be sinking deep into the work of anti-bias education. We will be activating our Jewish values to become anti-racist, address ableism, and confront anti-Semitism. We will be working to understand ourselves, appreciate others, and work toward the kind of world we want to live in.

As Rabbi Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" (Pirke Avot 1:14)

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work of anti-bias education."

**Meet Our
B'Mitzvah** pg. 7

Singing New Songs

By CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN



There are singing cows in the Zohar. Seriously. When the ark was being returned from the Philistines to the Israelites (Book of Samuel), it was carried by cows, who, we are told, went directly (yashar) home. Since yashar has the same Hebrew root as shir

(song), some of our ancestral Rabbis decided that the cows were singing, and not just singing, but singing Psalm 98: Shiru Ladonai Shir Chadash – Sing to God A New Song.

There are many ways to understand this, but the one I'm going with is that of the extra-ordinary: the image of a singing cow suggests a creature rising above its inborn nature. A song sung by a non-singing creature would by definition be a new song.

But what does it mean for us singing creatures to sing a new song? Multiple prayers invoke this new song: Psalms 96 and 98 in Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday night), along with Psalms 33

and 149 and Mi Chamocha in the morning services. But they don't specify what this new song is or what it means. Most historical commentaries interpret this as a song we will sing in the future; that, in the way that the songs we sing now laud miracles of the past, the songs we sing in the future will reflect the miracles to come. I tend to think of "shir chadash" more in the present. What does it mean to sing a new song, here, now?

As a verb, "chadeish" means to renew, repair, to make anew. In singing a new song, we are practicing an act of renewal, one that can take many forms. It can be external – a new poem, or melody. And it can be internal – a fresh perspective. Each time we approach a text or a song or really anything, we can find something we haven't seen before, experience something we have not yet felt. In this, we can have moments of the extraordinary, of the divine, and generate a constant renewal.

May this coming year give us infinite possibilities for singing new songs, externally and internally, and glorious visions for miracles now and in the future. And, if we're lucky, hear some singing cows.

Shana Tova!

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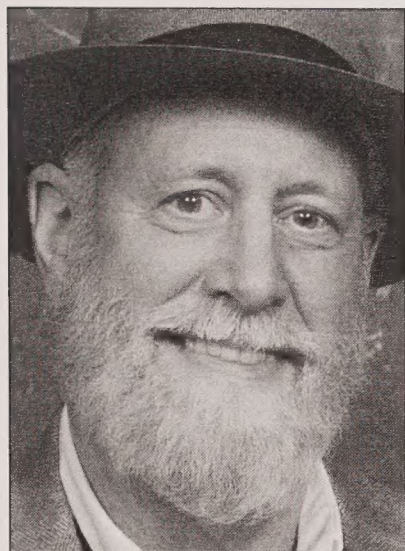
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Standing Together during the Days of Awe

By MARC LIPSCHUTZ



Rosh Hashanah is bracketed by the Torah portions of Nitzavim and Vayeilech. Nitzavim means standing, and its first verse auspiciously encompasses the solemnity of the day: "You are standing today, all of you, before HaShem your G-d."

In contrast, Vayeilech is a variant of the Hebrew word for "go," and indicates movement. The combination of these two parshot teaches a prodigious and timely lesson: On Rosh Hashanah, we must stand to quietly review our accomplishments and deficiencies, and move forward to commit ourselves to a productive new year.

I look forward to praying with you through our Zoomed services for the High Holy Days. As you know, we have multiple ways for you to attend services, with health-sustaining protocol in place, following pikuach nefesh, the Jewish value of preserving life. B'ezrat HaShem, with G-d's help, may it soon be safe for all of us to stand together in person.

In Nitzavim, G-d also declares, "I have placed life and death before you," and commands us, "You shall choose life." Implicit in these words is the obligation of atonement.

"...with G-d's help, may it soon be safe for all of us to stand together in person."

During these Days of Repentance, I most sincerely apologize to Sha'ar Zahav members and friends whom I have offended. Perhaps I did not reply to your emails, return your telephone calls, or respond harmoniously to your requests. For all of my transgressions, I am deeply sorry, and pledge to do better in 5782.

L'shanah tovah tikateivu v'teichateimu. May all of us, all of our loved ones, and all of creation be inscribed and sealed in life for a good, sweet, healthy, and productive New Year.

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Specifications supplied upon request.

What is Sha'ar Zahav's Ritual Committee?

By EMERY COHEN and JO ELLEN GREEN KAISER, co-chairs

The Ritual Committee is the heart and soul of communal, participatory worship at Sha'ar Zahav. We are charged with ensuring that our ritual and spiritual practices meet our community's needs, in consultation with the Rabbi and Cantor.

Because one of the central values of Sha'ar Zahav is that each of us is able to access Jewish ritual and practice, we stress participation and co-leadership in services. The Ritual Committee supports clergy in identifying and training service leaders, identifying and mentoring people who wish to give a drash (a teaching given orally that pertains to the week's Torah portion, upcoming holiday, or current events), and identifying and mentoring people who wish to participate in services in other ways, from Torah reading to candlelighting to reading an English blessing.

We help run logistics for holidays - the "gabbaim" who stage manage complex services are drawn from the Ritual Committee. We also maintain our Torah scrolls and other ritual objects.

Most of all, however, we talk about whether our current practices and liturgy meet our current needs. We ask questions like these:

How do we engage in Jewish ritual and community when we find that traditional ways are inaccessible?

What does it mean to light candles on Shabbat and how do we ensure that our rituals embody that meaning?

How do we reflect the diversity of the Jewish people and our congregation in our prayers? Are we drawing from and honoring Sephardi, Mizrahi, Ethiopian and other traditions for our chanting and prayers?

Does our G-d language reflect our multiple genders and identities as it should?

Is our liturgy accessible to all? Is it okay to belong to a synagogue and not attend Shabbat services regularly? How else can we engage with the spiritual/religious aspect of Judaism?

Do we want to further develop our spiritual practice? Go deeper into the intellectual roots of our liturgy? Find the wellsprings of social action in ritual?

"How do we reflect the diversity of the Jewish people and our congregation in our prayers?"

While the Ritual Committee (or as oldtimers affectionately call it, "RitCom") will always manage service logistics, the heart of the committee is asking these deeper questions.

The Ritual Committee is actively seeking new members to imagine new and meaningful ways of bringing people together around Shabbat and other holidays. This fall, we are launching a listening campaign to discover what you want from ritual and spiritual life at Sha'ar Zahav.

Please attend one of our listening sessions. And if you have never been to a Ritual Committee meeting before, please come! Or contact one of us to share your vision of what might be possible at ritualchair@shaarzahav.org.

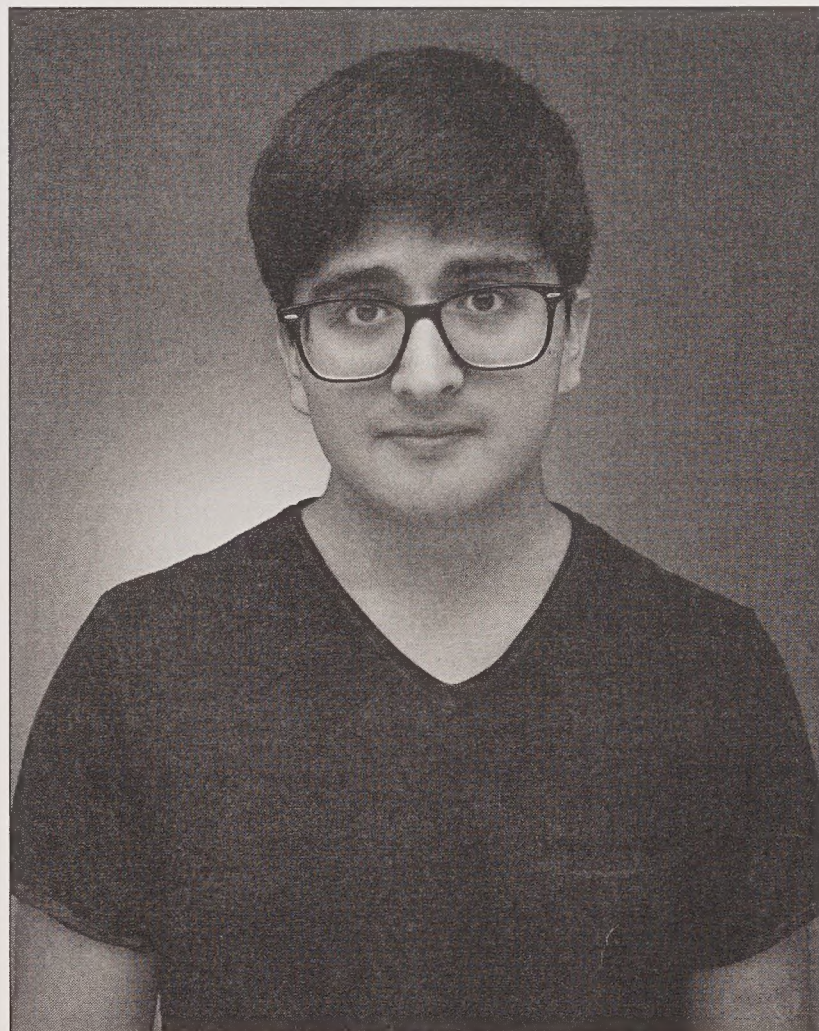
Franco Martinez

Hail and well met!

My name is Franco Martinez and my pronouns are they/them. I first joined Sha'ar Zahav in the spring of 2020 after learning about it from my work at the JCCSF. I am thrilled to have found such a vibrant and welcoming community. I am thankful to have pursued my journey to Judaism at Sha'ar Zahav!

I moved out from my home in El Paso, Texas to the Bay Area in 2013 to pursue a BFA in Acting. So if you ever want to gush and talk about theater, I am there. I currently work at the Bayview Opera House as their Program Assistant. I'm the person in the booth pushing the buttons on the light or sound board. I also work at the Shipyard Trust for the Arts as their Development Assistant. There are plenty of great artists who work at the Hunters Point Shipyard, and I encourage you to seek them out; you might find a piece you'd like to own! I am excited, though cautious, as theaters open up again. I have missed performing and giving audiences a chance to experience something new.

On my off time, I love to cook and spend time with my partner and friends. I recently have also gotten into baking and can make a really killer cheesecake. We occasionally also enjoy watching the clouds roll by our window (unless of course Karl the Fog decides to be a buzzkill that day). I also volunteer my time at Sha'ar Zahav. I am the co-leader, along with Emily



Dorian, of the Kaf-Lameds Young Adults group at the synagogue. Additionally I'm also one of Sha'ar Zahav's representatives at Keshet Ga'avah, the World Congress of LGBT+ Jews.

The last year has presented many challenges, but we continue to move forward -- yachad -- together!

SHA'AR ZAHAV NEW MEMBERS

MAY

Rachel Alexander
Jess Friessen
Michael Roderick Jr.

JUNE

Yuridia Garcia Berraquero
Jesse Brown
Ronnie Mason
John Smithers
Alissa Van Nort

JULY

Gregg Briggs
Michael O'Rourke

Experiencing Sha'ar Zahav and A Jewish Service

By PAUL COHEN

This past summer, Rabbi Camille Shira Angel, Sha'ar Zahav's former Rabbi, taught a class at the University of San Francisco (a Jesuit University) entitled "Queering Religion." Most of the students were Roman Catholic and only a few were beginning to understand their sexuality might be within the LGBTQI world.

At some of the classes, Sha'ar Zahav members, including Maggid Elias Ramer and Martin Rawlings-Fein, told their stories and discussed the Jewish belief that we are all made in the image of the Divine so all of us are worthy of honor and respect.

One of their assignments was to attend a service at Sha'ar Zahav. Students from USF have attended SZ services for years, but this time Rabbi Angel shared some of the student papers about their experiences. Experiencing our services, even on Zoom, was eye-opening for the students. Here are some of the comments:

"I have never been in a space that was focused on queer things and people...It was amazing to be surrounded by those who are like me and those who support me. It was truly something I didn't know I ever needed."

"I'm so happy that I was exposed to the positives of religion and people like me who are part of it."

"I now no longer shun religion and hold this consuming annoyance and anger towards it, because I know there are places where I can be welcomed with open arms."

"For someone who is visiting the website for the first time, it showed me that this was an inclusive community."

"With the music, I found myself lost in thoughts about the prayers. It was not a rigid service and allowed for individual interpretation of the prayers."

"One part of the service I found heartwarming was when there was a song where there was a tempo set through clapping. It added to the sense of community that the service was creating."

"Something that really stuck with me after the service was the inclusiveness of the content, especially that the prayer for healing was extended to those struggling with AIDS and mental illness."

"The sermon spoke about domestic violence and not just acknowledging the issue, but the lasting damage, both physical and psychological. In fifteen years of church every Sunday, I do not recall any mention of this important issue."

"That notion of Divine intention and love seen through the fact that a woman was leading the service, allowed me to appreciate the queering nature of flipping traditional religious norms to meet the needs of the community."

"During the standing silent meditation, I was appreciating the personal nature of prayer within the collective energy coming from the congregants. This was totally new for me."

"Sha'ar Zahav has become an institution of story telling that hopes to amplify the voices of the queer Jewish community through its reforming of the prayer book and other rituals."

These comments show the important role that Sha'ar Zahav has played in the Bay Area and the world for over four decades. We are open, inviting and thankful to share our spirituality, rich liturgical traditions and commitment to diversity.

The uniqueness of the prayers and translations in our siddur is just one example of how we have impacted the worship in other communities.

● A Havurah for Our Youngest Members

By JOE HARKMAN

On June 26, for the first time in their tiny little lives, seven babies brought together their 11 parents, a rabbi, an aunt, and even a couple of grandparents. Sha'ar Zahav's Baby Havurah had gone 3D. The Baby Havurah is for Sha'ar Zahav's youngest members. We have met monthly since September using Zoom. Starting at the height of the pandemic with just a couple of families, it was wonderful to have a community where we could bond over the novel experiences of parenthood during such extraordinary times.

As the months wore on, the babies grew. They started rolling, crawling, standing and sometimes falling. All the while, vaccines were slowly becoming available. We parents raced to find appointments and get shots. At the heart of Pride Month, our Havurah was vaccinated and could meet in person. The babies were bursting with so much self-expression. They were ready to share their giggles, cries, tiny smiles and eyes with the world. On the big day, we met in sunny Precita Park, under a tree in the center of the

field. We parents watched as the babies crawled all over each other. They tried each others' toys, stuck fingers in each others' noses, and babbled nonsense that we tried to decipher as though it were Talmudic genius.



Our monthly gatherings will continue to be in person at Precita Park on the 4th Saturday of the month at 11am, so please bring your 0-2-year-old. We hope you'll join us.

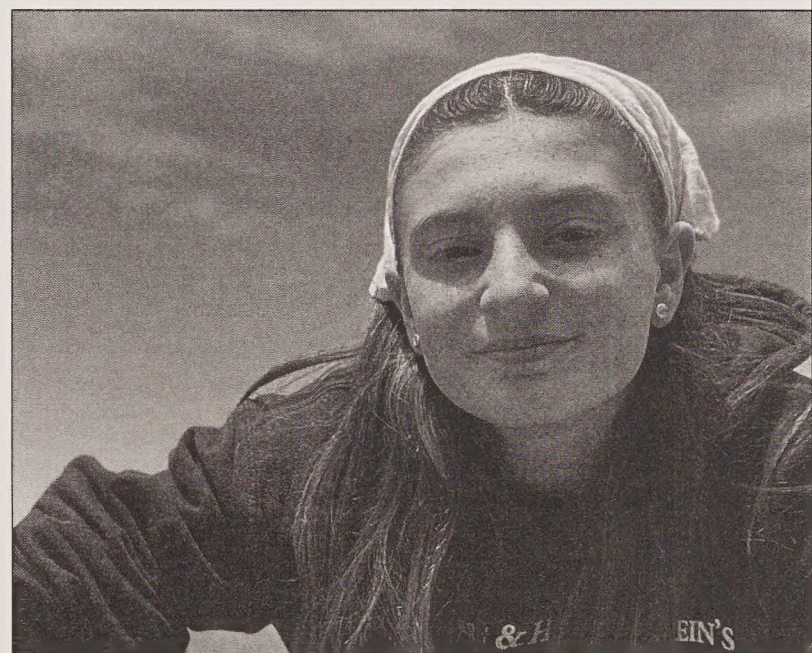
Please contact Sue Bojdak at education@shaarzahav.org for more details.

SHA'AR ZAHAV INTRODUCING THE B'MITZVAH

Noa Solomon-Carmel

Noa Solomon-Carmel is very excited to have her b'mitzvah on September 25th. Noa lives in the Sunset with her mom and dad (Debra Solomon and Gil Carmel), her brother Adam, and their two cats. Noa is a rising 8th grader at San Francisco Schoolhouse, where she especially enjoys her art classes. She also participates in Musical Theater Works (MTW) productions and enjoys reading, cooking, baking and painting at home. This summer, she is spending time hiking, camping and attending Camp Tawonga.

Noa is extremely grateful for the support she has received from everyone at Sha'ar Zahav, especially her Hebrew tutor Laura Lowe, b'mitzvah mentor Bob Gordon and drash mentor Lisa Katz.



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in memory of Lawrence Grossman

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in honor of the birth of Elodie Nancollas
and in memory of Ken and Ron Carlson,
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in memory of Dolores Holt and Richard Chaitin

Smadar Lavie

with gratitude for the work done this past
year to create community, and in memory
of my parents and grandmother

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in memory of Cynthia Lazarow

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and Cantor Bernstein

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leadership and for seeing B'tzelem Elohim
in each and every one of us

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- 21-22 Richard Meyerson**
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JULY

- 23 Barbara Cymrot**
in memory of her father,
Martin Cymrot
- 30 Jed Herman**
in memory of his father,
Harvey Herman

SHA'AR ZAHAV CONDOLENCES

MAY

- 6 Joel Lachter,**
on the death of his father, Jack Lachter
- 10 Gam Galindo, Jr.,**
on the death of his father, Gamaliel Galindo, Sr.
- 19 Tom Holt,**
on the death of his mother, Dolores Holt
- 26 Ami Zusman,**
on the death of her cousin, Larry Becker
- 26 Roseann Gould,**
on the death of her ex-husband, Edward Gould

JUNE

- 10 Andrew Berger,**
on the death of his friend, Larry Grossman
- 18 Scott Kramer,**
on the death of his cousin, Gale Neiss
- 24 Michael Rice,**
on the death of his cousin, Polly Katz

JULY

- 14 Nancy Weckler and Lisa Wunnenberg**
on the death of their friend, Sally Gearheart
- 15 Gail Ludwig,**
on the death of her mother, Barbara Ludwig
- 21 Rabbi Eric Weiss**
on the death of his step-father, Richard Chaitin

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Lee Gierson
Kevin Johnson
Bernard Pechter
Elliot Klein
David Pierce
Penny Dachinger
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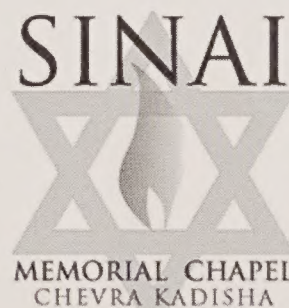
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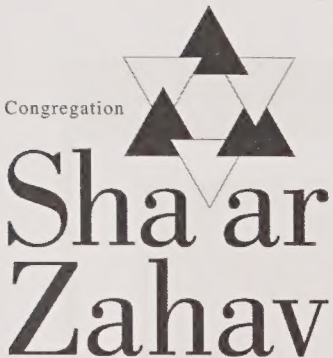
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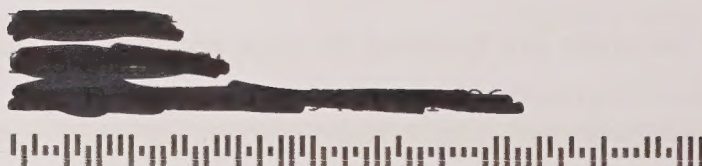
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Erev Sukkot, Monday evening, September 20th

Simchat Torah, Monday evening, September 27th

Hanukkah

**First Candle Lighting is on
Sunday evening, November 28th**

- **Planning for these holiday observances will be based on COVID recommendation and restrictions. Please check the bi-weekly emails and the shaarzahav.org website for the most up to date information.**